

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Amended) A digital incident recording apparatus comprising:

means for continuously capturing an actual visual scene [that comes] within the vicinity of said apparatus wherein said means for capturing said visual scene is achieved by an image capturing unit[,];

means for buffering up a plurality of captured visual [scene] scenes having a finite number of storage elements over-written repeatedly using a first-in-first-out mechanism such that a finite storage can be used to hold a plurality of said visual [scene] scenes continuously;

means for preserving [said] buffered scenes long enough to be [useful] stored and viewed after an incident has occurred;

means for triggering a preservation of said buffered scenes, wherein said means for triggering is a mechanism chosen from the group consisting of software [mechanism] mechanisms, firmware [mechanism] mechanisms, and hardware [mechanism and combinations thereof] mechanisms, wherein said firmware or software [mechanism comprises of] mechanisms comprise programmable logic instructions that fire off a signal in [responding] response to an external event, wherein said hardware [mechanism comprises] mechanisms comprise at least one sensor capable of [sending out a signal upon] detecting a physical event, wherein said physical event [can be] is at least one of a physical impact, sudden change in momentum, sudden change in force, shock wave, sudden change in sound wave amplitude, and manual activation [and combinations thereof]; and

means for providing overall operational control of said apparatus.

2. (Amended) A digital incident recording apparatus as recited in claim

1, further [comprises] comprising means for [temporally] temporary storage using a volatile memory device.

4. (Amended) A digital incident recording apparatus as recited in claim 1 wherein said means for preserving buffered scenes comprises [of] a persistent storage unit chosen from the group consisting of a persistent memory device where contents are directly written into, a persistent memory device where contents are transferred from a volatile memory device where images were first written into, a volatile memory device having a continued power supply so as to retain its [contains] contents, and a non-memory persistent storage media [and a combination thereof].

7. (Amended) A digital incident recording apparatus as recited in claim 1 further [comprises] comprising:
an additional [said] image capturing unit that captures scenes of side and back views to include activities of [the] an operator when said apparatus is to be used inside a transportation system.

9. (Amended) A digital accident recording apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said image capturing unit is used to capture scenes of a forward view as well as a backward view to include [the] activities of [said] an operator who operates a transportation system which is equipped with said digital accident recording apparatus.

10. (Amended) A digital incident recording apparatus as recited in claim 1, further [comprises] comprising means for manually triggering [said] a preservation of captured scenes, wherein said means for manually triggering

can be [an] a triggering action selected from the group consisting of taking snap shots of a visual scene, taking a sequence of continuous images of said visual scene, and [freezing the activity of said continuously capturing visual scene so as to prevent existing said scenes in said buffer of being replaced by new scenes in order to preserve existing said scenes] suspending and preventing an additional visual scene from being captured so that said buffered scenes are preserved; wherein said triggering action is achieved through a means selected from the group consisting of a touch screen having a sensor detecting a touching event, a voice activation system having a sound sensor detecting a voice event and a button switch simulating a sensor event by directly connecting to a triggering [a] circuitry.

11. (Amended) A digital incident recording apparatus as recited in claim 1 further [comprises] comprising [a] housing means to protect said [persistent storage] buffered scenes from being destroyed by an environmental factor, wherein said environmental factor includes temperature, impact, shaking, electrical shock and moisture.

16. (Amended) A method for digitally recording incidents using a finite storage for capturing unanticipated events, said method comprising the [that may occur at any time within a long time span comprises] steps of:

continuously capturing [the] an actual visual scene in real-time and converting said actual visual scene into digital form;

controlling [the] operation and timing of said [capture process] capturing step;

continuously buffering [up] a plurality of captured images from said capturing step using a first-in-first-out mechanism into a persistent storage means so that said [buffered] captured images can be buffered and preserved [when needed]; and

triggering a permanent preservation of a plurality of frames of said buffered images.

18. (Amended) A method for digitally recording [incident] incidents as recited in claim 16 further [comprises] comprising the step of:

detecting an external event so as to generate said triggering step, wherein said external event is chosen from the group consisting of physical impact, sudden change in momentum, sudden change in force, shock wave, sudden change [of] in sound wave amplitude, manual activation, [unusual occurrence of objects in said captured images] a presence of objects in said captured images atypical from a predetermined value, a distance between said objects in said captured images, and an atypical movement of said objects [and a combination thereof],

wherein said manual activation is selected from the group consisting of a button activation, touch screen activation and voice activation.